

**Remarks**

Favorable reconsideration of this application is requested in view of the above amendments and in light of the following remarks and discussion.

Claims 7-15, 22-27, 34-40, and 53-55 are currently pending in the application.

Claims 7, 10, 13, 22, 25, 34, 36, 38, and 53 are amended by way of the present response.

In the Office Action Claims 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 22, 24, 25, 27, 34-40, 53, and 55 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,400,463 to Kitamura et al. (Kitamura) in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,797,706 to Sugishima et al. (Sugishima). Claims 8, 11, 14, 23, and 26 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kitamura in view of Sugishima, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,081,342 to Nakai et al. (Nakai).

Regarding the rejection of independent Claim 7, the present invention prevents operation in a link copy mode (i.e., a mode that shares image printing operations between plural image formation apparatuses) when a function is selected which cannot be performed in either a master machine or a slave machine. Restated, when the link copy mode is selected, only functions that can be performed by each of the master machine and the slave machine are permitted, whereas functions that can be performed by only one of the master machine and the slave machine, for example, are prohibited.

By this arrangement, a user is prevented from choosing, once a link copy mode is selected, a function that would appear to be capable of being shared between the master machine and the slave machine, only to later determine that the function cannot be shared between the plural machines but instead can only be performed by the master machine or the slave machine, which creates an unintended delay. Thus, once the link copy mode is selected, the user is able to choose functions that can be shared between the master machine

and the slave machine, as each of the master machine and the slave machine are fully capable of performing the chosen function.

It is submitted that neither Kitamura nor Sugishima discloses or renders obvious the above discussed features. For example, Sugishima discloses a multi-unit image processing system with central control, including printers with and without sorters (i.e., printers capable of performing different functions from one another). Depending on whether sorted or unsorted copies are required, commands to print copies are sent to the appropriate printers, while other printers do not receive the commands to print copies.<sup>1</sup> Thus, Sugishima permits a function to be selected which cannot be performed in one of the printers but which can be performed in another one the printers, which is directly opposite to the recitation of independent Claim 7 that when the link copy mode is selected, a function that cannot be performed in either a master machine or a slave machine is prohibited from being selected. For these reasons, it is requested that the rejection of independent Claim 7 be withdrawn, and the allowance of independent Claim 7 is requested.

Independent Claims 10, 13, 22, 25, 34, 36, 38, and 53 are allowable for reasons similar to those discussed above with respect to independent Claim 7. Therefore, the allowance of independent Claims 10, 13, 22, 25, 34, 36, 38, and 53 is requested.

Claims 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 23, 24, 26, 27, 35, 37, 39, 40, 54, and 55 are allowable for the same reasons as the independent claims from which they depend, as well as for their own features. Therefore, the allowance of dependent Claims 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 23, 24, 26, 27, 35, 37, 39, 40, 54 and 55 is requested.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment, no further issues are believed to be outstanding in the present application, and the present application is believed to be in

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<sup>1</sup> Column 24, lines 22-37.

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condition for formal Allowance. A Notice of Allowance for Claims 7-15, 22-27, 34-40, and 53-55 is earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner deem that any further action is necessary to place this application in even better form for allowance, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned representative at the below listed telephone number.

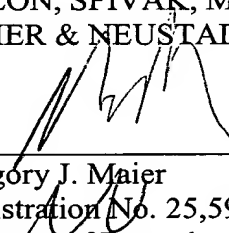
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Respectfully submitted,

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